

REMARKS

Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3-12, and 14-17 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 5, 9, 14, and 15 are the independent claims.

Claim 13 has been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claims 14 and 15 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

Initially, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indications that claims 1 and 3-12 are allowed and that claims 17-14 recite patentable subject matter and would be allowed if rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. By the present Amendment, Applicants have not amended any of claims 1 and 3-12. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 3-12 remain in allowable form. By the present Amendment, Applicants have rewritten claims 14 and 15 in independent form to include all of the features of their base claim, there being no intervening claims. Claims 16 and 17 depend from claim 15. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claims 14-17 are now in condition for allowance.

Independent claim 13 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,337,468 (Worthington et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,708,920 (Ohnishi et al.).

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding rejections are respectfully traversed for at least the reasons set forth above, -- namely the inclusion of subject matter in each of independent claims 14 and 15 indicated as patentable.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the independent claims patentably define the present invention over the citations of record. Further, the dependent claims should also be allowable for the same reasons as their respective base claims and further due to the additional features that they recite. Separate and individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places the subject application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment as an earnest attempt to advance

prosecution and reduce the number of issues is requested under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action. However, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to such matters.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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